

Bill Would Separate Reform CPUC Hierarchy

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A California lawmaker wants to keep state energy regulators from holding private settlement talks instead of public hearings following a failed mediation process in the San Bruno pipeline blast cases.

The California Public Utilities Commission appointed former U.S. Sen. George Mitchell to mediate private talks over how much Pacific Gas & Electric Co. should be fined for the deadly explosion last fall at the direction of CPUC president Michael Peevey.

The mediation process ended after the cities of San Bruno and San Francisco and the commission's own consumer advocacy branch complained that PG&E got advance notice of Mitchell's hiring.

The bill by Democratic Sen. Jerry Hill of San Mateo announced Monday would remove a legal requirement for all CPUC staff to be directed by the commission's president.

The 2010 blast killed eight people and destroyed 38 homes.

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